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ABSTRACT

Recent studies on racial self-esteem show a reversal in the tendency for black children to have negative self-concepts. This research explored the causal explanations for such a reversal by investigating the process by which social status, parental attitudes, and socialization practices influence the development of black children's racial preferences and stereotypes. Data were obtained from interviews with 60 black mothers of five or six year old children, and from a race awareness test of the children in the home. The theoretical model predicted that the SES variables (mother's occupation, mother's education, and family income) affects two family relationship variables (mother's racial attitudes, and mother's socialization practices such as presence of black cultural objects and teaching of blacks' treatment in society) which in turn affects the child's racial self-esteem (measures of child's own race preference and racial stereotypes). It was further hypothesized that the socialization variables would be the most effective predictors of children's racial self-esteem and act as mediators of the socioeconomic and attitudinal variables. The underlying theoretical model was supported. It was also found that the socialization variables were the most effective predictors of children's racial self-esteem. It was found, however, that not all of the effects on the child's racial self-esteem were mediated through socialization. (Author/NG)

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SOCIALIZATION FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK CHILDREN'S RACIAL SELF ESTEEM

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PARENTAL INFLUENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF BLACK CHILDREN'S RACIAL SELF ESTEEM

by LaFayette W. Lipscomb

Recent studies by Lipscomb (1972), Ward and Brown (1972) and Rosenberg and Simmons (1973) indicate that there is a reversal in the previously found tendency for black children to view themselves and their racial group negatively; black children, increasingly, seem to prefer their own race and have higher self esteems than was the case in earlier studies, by Clark and Clark (1939, 1947, 1950), Goodman (1952), Morland (1958, 1962, 1966) and Porter (1971). In fact, Ward and Brown state that the images black children now hold are the opposite of those held by black youngsters of ten and twenty years ago. While some black children still display negative attitudes toward their own race, the actual numbers of children who do so and the numbers of negative responses by individual children seem to have decreased over the last few years.

Why has there been a decrease in negative self esteem of black children? Further, why are there still differences in black children's racial self esteem? This research attempts to address these questions in terms of black children's socialization. Socialization is the process through which persons learn what they are expected to do, how to do it, and how to evaluate themselves and others. Primary institutions such as the family, peer gourps, etc. (as opposed to secondary forces such as the school, church, government, media, etc.) are the most influential in early socialization (Elder, 1968; Elkin and Handel, 1972) for in these settings the child first learns certain behaviorial patterns, attitudes, norms, etc. which are expected of him throughout life. This general pattern of self development should hold true also for the development of children's racial self esteem and awareness. So we expect to find the explanations of changes and decrements in black children's self esteem in their early primary socialization.

A number of researchers have stressed the importance of parental attitudes in the development of racial attitudes in young children. Porter (1971) suggests that:

> One of the most important agents of attitude transmission is the family. The child may accept the parents' norms, values, and behavior patterns as his own through such processes as identification, since he is not born with social values and attitudes. Topics beyond his comprehension leave him no alternative but to internalize the values of others (p. 14).

Horowitz (1938) and Goodman (1952) also emphasize the importance of parental attitudes in the development of race awareness. Rainwater (1970) views the family as the major source of identity, and Robert Coles (1967) aptly describes the family, particularly the black mother, as being the agent for instilling courage and endurance in poor black children to successfully adapt to their lot in society. These and other studies of socialization suggest that the family is most influential in determining the types of racial attitudes and images that children develop.

This research suggests that parents' socio-economic status, attitudes and socialization practices may account for the differences found in black children's racial self esteem. Children's racial self esteem is contingent on the orientations that parents have toward their own race, and black parents who see blacks in the "traditional" role are more likely to have children with negative racial self esteem, while those who have a "pro black" orientation will have children with a more positive racial self esteem. The traditional role reinforces the caste position of blacks in society. Parents who accept inferior roles for blacks teach their children that blacks should adhere to their subordinate position in order to survive; they present blacks in a negative light, and the children of these parents tend to learn the negative image of blacks which their parents hold.

Parents who have assumed a pro-black orientation are thought to have incorporated the elements of the "Black Mystique" suggested by Himes (1973 p. 69). Himes sees the "Black Mystic" as consisting of the following elements:

1. Refusal to disparage blackness as related to black people;
2. Self acceptance and revaluation of blackness;
3. The emergence of "soul" or the acceptance and glorification of characteristics of black people;
4. The doctrine of "authenticity" or the proposition that experiences and ideas of black people are genuine and human;
5. Definition of the unique black experience;
6. Growing attention to black accomplishments in black history, black art, and literature, black music and the like;
7. Creation of the idea of black power;
8. The discovery of identity through these experiences and within the life of the black community (1973).

Thus, these parents stress the positive characteristics of being black. They emphasize the gains and accomplishments of blacks, as well as the beauty of blackness, and accordingly, their children acquire a positive image of blackness leading to positive racial self esteem.

Since one of the sources of high self esteem presumably is the evaluation of one's success, it follows that the segment of the black population which has made the most progress in society and which is most free from subjugation will have the highest esteem for their own race. The middle class black has been more successful in these endeavors, and thus this class more than any other should have a pro-black orientation, thereby leading the children of middle class parents to more positive racial self regard. However, a process of diffusion of black pride and racial identityis also believed to be at work within the black population. Thus, while the middle class is expected to have incorporated the most positive black orientation, it is suggested that this orientation may have penetrated the lower classes to some degree.

To clarify the foregoing and to test these notions, a Socialization Model of Parent-Child Relationship in the Development of Racial Self Esteem has

been developed. This model suggests three major groups of independent variables relevant to the child's racial self esteem.

The first group of variables includes parental education, occupation, and income. These variables represent possible social class factors in differences found among parents' socializing practices and attitudes, as well as among the children's racial self esteem.

The second block of variables involves a series of parental attitudes. A black ideology scale is used to measure parents' attitudes in a variety of areas concerning blacks. A Semantic Differential scale is used to measure how parents rate blacks on several affective dimensions. These are conceived as a sample of indicators for determining whether a parent has incorporated a pro-black orientation.

The third block deals with the socialization practices of the parent. The ways in which the parents attempt to teach their children about blacks are assessed here, as well as parents' material expression of their attitudes toward blackness (e.g., their clothes, hair styles, names, buying habits, etc.). These variables are meant to determine whether parents socialize their children to positive attributes of blacks.

The final block of variables are the dependent measures of children's racial self esteem. A preference measure is used to see whether black children prefer members of their own race or the white race. A second measure determines what types of stereotypes children hold of their own and of the white race. A positive racial self esteem results when children prefer and hold positive stereotypes of their own race.

The following propositions weld these blocks into a single model:

1. Social class directly affects parents' attitudes. In particular, the higher the social class, the more positive the parents' attitudes towards blackness.

2. There is a direct correspondence between parent's attitudes and socialization practices. In particular, the more positive the attitudes of blackness, the more the mother will employ socialization practices which will present blacks in a favorable light.

3. There is a direct relation between parents' socialization practices in the area of race and achild's racial self esteem. In particular, practices which present blacks favorably will yield a child with positive regard for blacks.

The model is diagrammed in block form in Figure 1.

The intention in this paper is to test this general model, using data from sixty children and their parents. That is, we will examine the validity of the three general propositions above and their adequacy in explaining differences in racial self esteem among black children.

SAMPLE

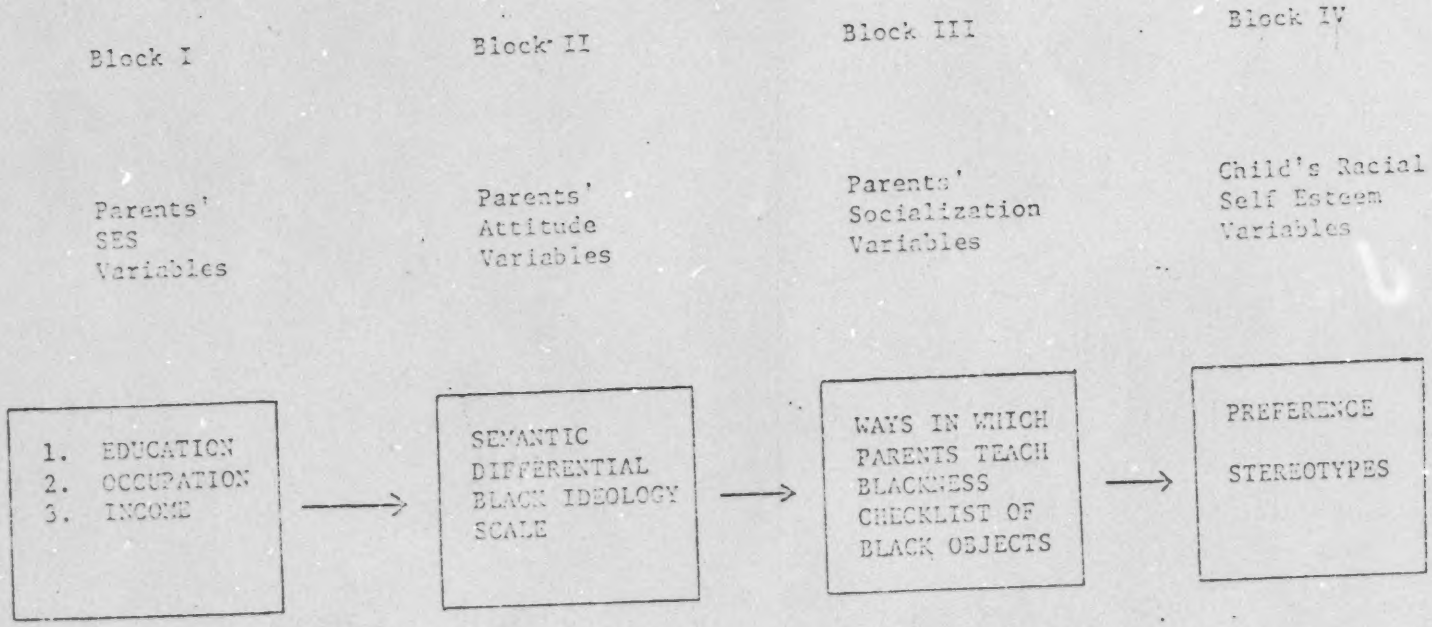
From a list of kindergarten programs in the city, both private and public, it was possible to derive a tentative classification of children according to class--middle, stable working class and lower class. From this breakdown, a stratified random sample of 60 subjects was drawn, 10 males and 10 females from each of the three designated classes.

The children and mothers* were interviewed during the month of March 1974. Each child was administered the Lipscomb-Bolick Race Awareness Test to determine the children's racial self esteem and each mother filled out a parent's interview schedule composed of attitude questions, socialization practices and background information. All respondents participated willingly.

The Children's Race Awareness Test took approximately 20 minutes to administer. All child subjects participated eagerly and with much enthusiasm. The subjects did not tire of the test and often looked at the pictures again while the mother was being interviewed.

*Concern here is focused on mother because in the welfare class, father absence is a mandatory condition (a North Carolina law stipulates that an able-bodied male cannot reside in the home of a recipient of welfare).

Figure 1 Socialization Model of Parent-Child Relationship in the Development of Racial Self Esteem



In approximately 90% of the cases, the interview was conducted in the living room or family room of the homes. The remaining interviews were held at the kitchen table. Usually the mother was present while the child was being interviewed. The interviewer gave the mother her questionnaire prior to administering the child the test. In most instances, however, the parents became so attentive to the child's responses that they failed to fill out their own questionnaire. As this was the rule rather than the exception, the interviewer cautioned onlookers not to make comments or facial expressions when the child subject gave responses. The child was instructed to give the answer that he or she wanted and not what parents or other siblings might want. This was necessary particularly with the lower class children as in most instances there were other siblings present at the administering of the test. This tends to be a major limitation when such tests are given in the home which is not present when the test is administered at school and the testing is done away from others. In several instances when a sibling was very near in age to the subject, the researcher volunteered to give the sibling the test so that he/she would not feel neglected. These results, however, were not recorded.

All parents approached agreed to let their children participate and also agreed to fill out the parents' schedules. The parent's questionnaire schedules took approximately 45 minutes. In all but one of the sixty families in the sample, the mother was the natural mother of the child respondent. This one exception was a lower class respondent who had adopted the child when she was two years old, but had actually taken care of the child since birth. All mothers were extremely cooperative and interested in the research. An average of 1 1/2 hours was spent in each home for administering of both schedules and to establish rapport.

METHODOLOGY

Children

The Lipscomb-Bolick Race Awareness Test was developed for this research. One hundred and sixty-three color pictures composed of groups of people and individuals (blacks and whites, males and females) were used to determine children's racial awareness. The test attempted to measure both the cognitive and evaluative component of race awareness. However, for this research only the affective or evaluative component was analyzed.

In the evaluative component of the Lipscomb-Bolick Race Awareness Test, children were asked to express judgments or feelings about models of the white and black race in terms of their preferences and stereotypes. To measure preference, subjects were asked to choose among models of the two races by picking the one that they would rather do something for. Where subjects chose members of their own race, they were scored "1", if they preferred a member of the white race, they were scored "3" and if they failed to choose either of the models, they were scored "2" since the intent was to see if the subject preferred his own race over the caucasion race.

To assess information on the perception of stereotypes held by young children with respect to racial grouping, children were asked questions which had negative stereotypes, and others which were positive, to see which racial group would be picked. Children were scored "1" if they attributed positive stereotypes to their own racial groups and "1" if they attributed negative stereotypes to whites; if they attributed negative stereotypes to blacks and positive stereotypes to whites, they were scored "3". Where they failed to make a response, they were scored "2". Data were factor analyzed to get the

best composite score. Both scales were one factor solutions. The preference dimension yielded a reliability of .84 and validity of .91. The stereotype yielded a "positive personal characteristic" dimension with a reliability of .75 and validity of .83. As these composite scales were moderate, it was felt that these could adequately be interpreted as aspects of racial self esteem.

Parents

Five schedules were used to obtain data on parents. Three of the scales were factor analyzed to assess the reliability and validity of each measure. The Semantic Differential was not factor analyzed since this particular measurement has been repeatedly used in attitudinal research with repeated demonstrations of its reliability and validity. A factor analysis of the SES measures indicated that each measure separated into several factors with high loadings and thus could not be compiled into a single scale. For this reason it was decided that each variable would be used as an independent measure rather than collapsing them into a single scale which would represent social class as we had originally planned. Thus while the sample was originally selected using a rough estimation of overall social class, a social class designation is not used further in the data analysis. The occupational, education and income variable will hereafter be used rather than middle class, working class and lower class designations.

Because of the large amount of missing data on father variables, it was necessary to use those variables which pertained to the mother's background as indicators of SES. Inspection of the variables on education and occupation showed that for those points on which we had information, there was a high

correlation between mother's and father's education, and the same was true for occupation.[1]

ANALYTIC PROCEDURES

Through use of factor analyses, composite scales were drawn to obtain the variables to be used in the analysis of data. Using multiple regression as an estimating technique the following model was tested:

SES ⟶ Attitudes ⟶ Socialization ⟶ Racial Self Esteem

As the model suggests causality, it was assumed that the SES variables were unaffected by the parents' attitudes, socialization and children's racial self esteem. While it is questionable as to a unidirectional flow between attitudes and socialization, we accept the social psychological tradition which suggests that attitudes are the source of socialization practices.

Three background variables--mother's education, mother's occupation and family income--were used as indication of the socio-economic variables (the independent variables).

From the factor analysis six composite attitudinal scales were derived. These scales consisted of mother's attitudes on 1) the establishment; 2) American ethnocentrism; 3) black physical characteristics; 4) evaluation of blacks on affective dimensions; 5) potency of blacks and 6) the activity of blacks.

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[1]An additional consideration was made with respect to the mother's occupational variable. As a large number of the mothers in the sample were housewives, the decision was made to look at the differences between professional mothers and all other mothers. It was thus necessary to recode the data so that mothers who were professional, managers and administrators were coded as "1" and all others as "0". This allows us to determine the causal relationship between mothers of high occupational status and their children's self esteem as opposed to all other mothers.

The latter three scales consisted of questions which the mothers had to make judgments of how blacks rated on these items compared to others in society. Due to the small amount of variance explained by mothers' attitudes on the evaluation of blacks on affective dimensions and the potency of blacks, these scales were eliminated from the analysis.

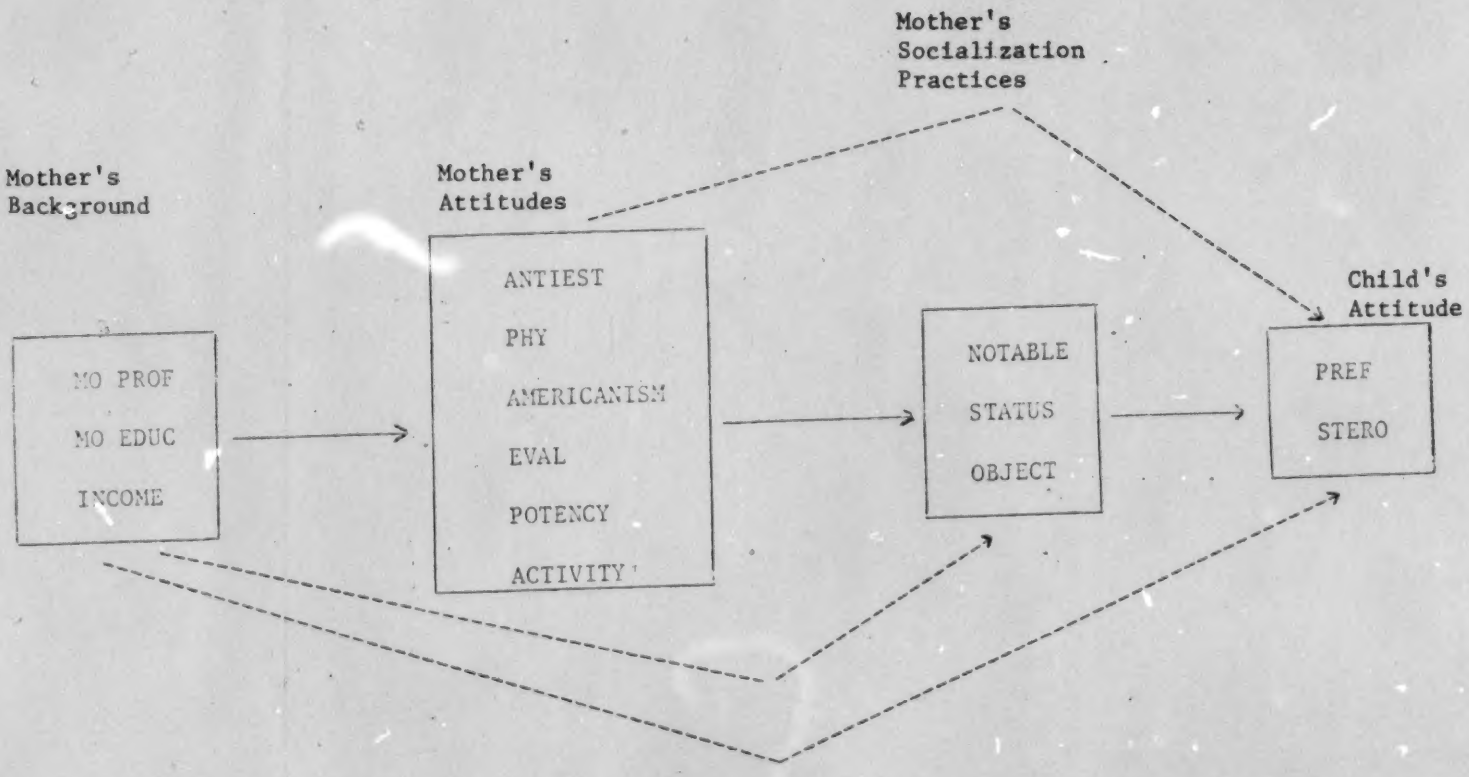
Three socialization measures were used: 1) one schedule questioned mothers on the teaching of their children about the differential treatment of blacks in society; 2) a second, concerned the importance of teaching children about notable blacks from all walks of life, and 3) the third, was an observed count of the presence of black cultural objects found in the home.

The measures of the dependent variable-racial self esteem were obtained from the children's preference of black race and attitudes towards blacks as indicated by the attributing of certain stereotypes to members of a particular race in the Lipscomb-Bolick Race Awareness Test. (See Figure 2).

Sheaf Coefficients

To test the theoretical model that SES ⟶ Attitudes ⟶ Socialization path will have the most effect on predicting children's racial self esteem, it was necessary to look at the block affects of these variables on the dependent variables. Heise (1972) devised a method which allows one to have a single coefficient summarizing the causal effects of a set of variables when other variables are controlled. Sheaf coefficients can be used to yield a single measure of the effects of each block of variables on the dependent variables. The notion underlying the theoretical model (that socio-economic variables are causally related to attitudes, which are causally related to socialization practices, and thus are predictors of a child's racial self esteem) will be

FIGURE 2 THEORETICAL MODEL



------ Auxiliary Theory

_____ Main Theory

supported only if the sheaf coefficients from the socialization blocks are statistically significant and larger than the coefficients for the other block.

Table I
Sheaf Coefficients of Dependent Variables

	Preference	Stereotypes
SES	+.26	+.26
Attitudes	+.28	+.17
Socialization	+.31	+.28

All coefficients are statistically significant at .05 or below

From Table I, it can be seen that this pattern is technically evident for both of the dependent variables. Socialization, for both preference and stereotypes, is the most effective predictor of children's racial self esteem and is a mediator of the socio-economic and attitudinal effects. Thus, the findings are:

1. Socialization practices affect self attitudes when holding parents' attitudes and background constant:
   a. the more black objects found in the home;
   b. the more mother teaches her child about notable blacks from all walks of life;
   c. the less she teaches her child about the extreme differences in treatment of blacks in society, the more positive the child's self attitudes.
2. Mother's attitudes toward race affects her socialization practices, holding background constant:
   a. Mothers with anti-establishment attitudes are more likely to teach their children about notable blacks from all walks of life;
   b. Mothers who hold lower attitudes of American ethnocentrism are more likely to have black cultural objects in the home;

c. Mothers who view blacks as active tend to have more black cultural objects in the home;

d. Mothers who hold positive attitudes of black physical characteristics tend to teach their children about the extreme differences in treatment of blacks in society.

3. Mother's background affects her attitudes, although different aspects of social class have contrary effects:

a. Professional mothers tend to be proestablishment, hold low American ethnocentric attitudes, hold positive attitudes on black physical characteristics and view blacks as active;

b. High income mothers tend to be proestablishment;

c. Educated mothers tend to be antiestablishment, hold low American ethnocentric attitudes and view blacks as inactive.

The sheaf analysis does indicate that there appears to be a causal chain as shown in the diagram with socialization and parental attitudes intervening between mother's background and child's own self attitudes. It further shows that all of the blocks are effective predictors of children's self attitudes. However, because the coefficients are only slightly larger than the preceding coefficients, it is apparent that not all of the relationship between mother's attitudes and child's attitude is mediated by socialization practices. It is also apparent that not all of the relationship between mother's background and her socialization practice is mediated by her attitudes. In all cases, there are direct effects remaining. This is evidenced further when we view a modified version of the sheaf coefficients found in Table II.

Table II
Modified Version of Sheaf Coefficients on Dependent Variables

	Preference		
SES	A) .35	B) .28	D) .26
ATTITUDES		C) .27	E) .28
SOCIALIZATION			F) .31
	Stereotypes		
SES	A) .32	B) .33	D) .26
ATTITUDES		C) .22	E) .17
SOCIALIZATION			F) .28

In this modified version, the steps are as follows: 1) Cell A compares the effect of the SES on the dependent variables without controls; 2) Cell B indicates the effect of SES on the dependent variables controlling for attitudes only; 3) Cell C indicates the effect of attitudes on the dependent variable controlling for SES; 4) Cells D, E. F indicate the effects of each block variable on the dependent variable, controlling for all other variables.

For the preference variable it can be noted that when we control for attitudes when looking at SES, that there is a decrease in the amount of variance explained. Thus we can assume that the mother's attitude is acting as an intervening variable. If we note in Cell D that the sheaf coefficient is smaller than both B and A, we can also assume that both attitudes and socialization are intervening variables between the mother's background variables and the child's attitudes. Tis pattern, however, is not apparent when we compare Cell E to C as the coefficient does not become smaller when we look at the effect of attitudes on racial preference when socialization and SES are controlled

simultaneously. While there is very little difference in the size of the sheaf coefficients of Cells C and E, it is probable that both are acting as intervening variables, but that direct effects of socialization may be stronger than the linkage which is suggested in the theoretical model.

With the stereotype variable the pattern is also present; it can be seen that both attitudes and socialization are intervening variables between mother's background variables and the child's racial attitudes. However, when we compare Cell E to C, we see that it is clearly evident that socialization intervenes causally between parent's attitudes and child's stereotypes and this was not the case with preference.

The analysis of this modified version of sheaf coefficients, for the most part, indicates that the underlying theoretical notion is supported. There is a pattern present even though decreases in coefficients are not large. Socialization and attitudes appear to be intervening variables which effect children's racial self attitudes. That this pattern is not more strongly related is probably due to the fact that not all of the relationship between mother's and child's attitudes is mediated by socialization practices. Not all of the relationship between mother's background and socialization practices is mediated by her attitudes.

Actually, there are several reasons why this pattern of results might have occurred: 1) there is the possibility that measurement error interfered with the partialling process; 2) perhaps not enough of the right variables were included in the socialization and attitude blocks to absorb all of the SES effects; 3) all SES effects are not mediated through parents' attitudes and socialization practices; and 4) other outside effects might be predictors of both SES and children's racial self esteem. These considerations will be discussed more in detail later.

CONCLUSION

While the Sheaf Analysis presented in this paper suggests the theoretical notion that mothers' attitudes and socialization practices, act as intervening variables in the explaining of children's racial self esteem, there are several other findings worthy of noting.

It was found that the positive effect of status on preference depends on the maternal attitudes and socialization practices through which they are mediated. The same is true for stereotypes; none of the status measures had uniformly positive effects, though the professional status of mothers most often had positive effects.

Two of the findings are especially noteworthy for the implications; anti-establishment attitudes and teaching about notable blacks were positive predictors of preference and stereotypes. That is, mothers with anti-establishment attitudes taught their children more about notable blacks from all walks of life and thus had children with positive self esteem. It was found that only the educated mother tended to have anti-establishment attitudes, while professional mothers and those with high income had proestablishment attitudes. It seems that the latter mothers, by achieving acceptance and material rewards, felt less alienated from the system. These mothers may have taught their children less about notable blacks from all walks of life because they tend to be more selective about their children's exposure in all areas. Thus, they would tend to be selective in their choice of blacks whom they feel it is important for their children to know about.

Regardless of the background variable or the attitude of the parents, when mothers taught their children about the extreme differences in treatment of blacks in society, the children tended to have less positive black stereotypes. This

outcome may be due to the fact that the child interprets the negative differential treatment of blacks in society as being caused by some negative traits which are common only to blacks. This impression is thus reflected in the child's choice of negative black stereotypes. These children may also be reflecting not only the parents' attitudes, but also those of white and broader institutions in society.

The status variables tend to be consistent in their predictions. Mothers who are high on education tend to be pro-black in their attitudes, while mothers who are professional tend to be less so. When income is an effective predictor, it is very similar to the professional status of mothers in predicting children's self esteem. Since the professional mothers for the most part are also from the highest income families, this is not surprising.

We predicted that mothers who had the most positive black attitudes would also use socialization practices which would portray blacks in a favorable light. While this was found for attitudinal effects on teaching about black notables and having black objects in the home, it was not the case for the teaching of status differences. The mothers with positive black attitudes also taught their children about the extreme differential treatment of blacks in society. By so doing, these mothers presented blacks in an unfavorable or fatalistic light which produced generally negative consequences. These mothers appear to be totally unaware of the effects that this practice has on their children. By pointing out the differences found in society, the mothers are probably attempting to teach their children how they view the situation in order to prepare them for social realities in attaining their life goals. But in so doing, the mothers accomplish an unintended consequence; their children absorb negative images of blacks and thus hold negative stereotypes of their own race.

While the intent of the research was to identify causal explanations for differences in children's racial self esteem, it should be pointed out that a number of the findings suggest the need for a more detailed analysis, one which would attempt to explain in greater detail the complex findings which were noted. For example, why is it that educated and professional mothers differ from each other so sharply in their attitudes and socialization practices?

Suggested Research

The findings suggest that the evaluative component of racial self esteem, and especially stereotyping is very complicated and subtle. While a beginning has been made in attempting to explain why there are differences among black children, much more needs to be done in explaining how parental influences affect children's racial self esteem. In future research along this line, additional attitude and socialization variables must be found which will enhance explanation, such as the amount of love, protective care, and emotional support that a child receives from his parents.

A second suggestion for future research is to look at the relationship between older siblings and young children to see what effects the conceptions of the older children have on the development of younger children's racial self esteem. Since older siblings are responsible for the care of younger children in many black families, it might be that the older children's attitudes have as much or more influence on 5 year olds' racial concepts as the parents'.

Future research should also examine the effects of the child's cognitive component of race awareness in relation to the evaluative component. This would allow one to determine whether the responses indicated in the evaluative component was really based on racial or other types of discriminations.

Finally, there are a number of institutions outside of the family which are in part responsible for the socialization of children. The effects of these institutions on the development of racial self esteem should be examined in order to determine why black children hold the conceptions of their race and themselves that they do; the effects of school, church, the media and peer groups.

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